



## King County Tent City Siting: Frequently Asked Questions

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**Q: How was this site permitted?**

**A:** King County Code (KCC) 14.30.020 requires a *special use permit* for the use of county property except for the use of rights-of-way, which are covered by a different permit. The application for special use permit is evaluated on the feasibility of the proposed use, its impact on other uses of the county property and its impact on public health and safety, and how it will impact sensitive area issues. No public notice or hearing requirements are associated with the special use permit issuance under KCC Chapter 14.30.

The site near the Brickyard Park-and-Ride was visited April 30 and a DDES wetland biologist identified the location of the wetlands, slopes on the site and the area most appropriate for access, parking and the siting of the tents. The conditions were incorporated into the special use permit. These conditions limit use of the site for a tent city to a maximum of 90 days. The site is zoned "Office", and pursuant to KCC 21A.08.050, social services are a permitted use in the Office Zone. Social services are not defined in the King County Zoning Code. However, the social service classification referenced in the Standard Industrial Classification Manual (as referenced in KCC 21A.02.070) includes emergency shelters, homes for destitute men and women, and temporary relief services. Tent City clearly fits within the Zoning Code's Social Service classification. The use is therefore outright permitted at this Office zoned site and does not require zoning code land use approvals. There are no public hearing or notice requirements associated with a use that is outright permitted in the Zoning Code. Additionally, since the use is comprised exclusively of non-permanent structures such as tents, honey buckets and dumpsters, there are no construction permits required. Temporary structures do not trigger drainage requirements or a requirement for impervious surface calculations. The site is already cleared and there are no impacts to the site's slopes so no grading permits are required.

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review was conducted on the proposed use and a Determination of Nonsignificance was issued on May 5, 2004. Since the special use permit issued pursuant to KCC 14.30 is not a land use permit as classified in KCC 20.20.020, there is no administrative appeal of the SEPA determination of nonsignificance pursuant to KCC 20.44.120.

**Q: Why was *this* site selected?**

**A:** There were three criteria developed by SHARE/WHEEL for locating Tent City 4 (and also noted in the Council proviso). These were that it be on county-owned property, one half mile or less from public transportation and at least the size of half a football field. The county examined dozens of county-owned facilities, and selected one in unincorporated King County rather than in a city to ensure the ability for the Tent City residents to locate quickly, rather than camp in a park.

**Q: How can you insure the public health and safety of local neighbors as well as temporary residents of Tent City?**

**A:** King County has no Board of Health code provisions to issue permits for tent cities. However, the county does provide environmental health-related services to tent cities.

Source: King County Department of Community and Human Services Web site:  
<http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/Housing/TentCity.htm>

Public Health's Environmental Health Staff consult with the organizers on a range of subjects to help promote a safe and healthy living environment. They discuss the maintenance and operation of toilet facilities, garbage control, obtaining potable water, hand washing and safe food handling practices. Public Health inspectors visit tent cities at set up, and will follow up.

**Q: Who will insure that use restrictions are monitored and effectively implemented? Has this been successful at other sites?**

**A:** King County will monitor the conditions imposed by visiting the site at least weekly during the first month of operation and periodically for the remaining two months. Transit Security will monitor the site on a regular basis. Seattle/King County Public Health's environmental health inspectors will follow up with health related issues if problems arise.

**Q: How will refuse and human waste be handled on the site?**

**A:** A dumpster will be brought in for refuse. Residents are forbidden from littering and those with responsibility for security strictly enforce this rule. SHARE/WHEEL provides portable toilets for sanitation, which Public Health- Seattle & King County deems sufficient to handle even the maximum number of occupants (100) at Tent City.

**Q: What "self-policing" measures will be taken to patrol for the use of drugs, alcohol, and other potential problems on the site?**

**A:** Prohibition of drugs, alcohol, weapons, swearing, fighting, littering, disturbing neighbors, etc. are very clearly written into the Tent City agreement with the county. There are two residents assigned to security 24 hours per day. These residents patrol within the encampment and within a two-block radius of Tent City. There is a five member executive committee elected weekly. One member of the executive committee is on duty, awake and available, 24 hours per day. All residents of Tent City are held accountable for reporting violations of the code of conduct. The City of Seattle reports that there have been no disruptions or disturbances with ANY tent city site in their city, and that the Tent City residents worked with the community and lived up to all expectations as set forward during occupancy.

**Q: Will the temporary residents be screened to insure they will not include felons, sex offenders, and drug users/sellers?**

**A:** All Tent City residents register by name. This roster is checked weekly against the list of registered sex offenders available on the Web site of the King County Sheriff's Office. Drug use is prohibited by the code of conduct and a violation of this tenant would result in immediate expulsion from the encampment.

**Q: Will open fires be allowed? Is fire prevention equipment on site? Where is the closest fire hydrant?**

**A:** There are no open fires allowed. Fire extinguishers are on site and are posted according to directives of the fire department. The closest fire hydrant is on the sidewalk adjacent to the site.

**Q: Who will evaluate Tent City sites in the future? What is the process?**

**A:** There is currently a motion before the King County Council that addresses the process for evaluating future Tent City sites.

This material is available in alternate formats upon request.